



Partnering To Ensure South Florida's Future



**The Museum of Discovery and Science and the
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Partnership**

OUTREACH PLAN FOR GREATER EVERGLADES ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

PHASE II PROGRESS REPORT – APRIL 2005

PHASE II: 2002-2005

Purpose and Background

In 1999, the Museum of Discovery and Science, together with the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, embarked upon a three-phased outreach plan that was approved by the Working Group and the Task Force—along with the Museum's Board of Trustees – to develop a long-term, far-reaching public education outreach plan. The focus of Phase I was to build the environmental exhibitry that would establish the solid foundation needed for programming, outreach and other educational initiatives.

The primary intent of Phase II of the Outreach Plan has been to extend the reach and impact of the Museum's educational outreach in support of Task Force goals. Specifically, the Museum, through the support of the agency members of the Task Force, increased its programmatic offerings, served as a community resource and provided new and improved interpretive exhibits. Each of these enhancements has helped provide useful and engaging public information about the Greater Everglades Ecosystem and its restoration to the 1.2 million visitors who came to the Museum during the past three years. The following report highlights the accomplishments of the Museum-Task Force partnership over the past three years.

PHASE II ACTIVITIES

Total Numbers served to date: 5,297,982

1. Museum-based Education: On-Site Public Programs/ Served 1,292,623 visitors

- Over the past three years, the Museum has welcomed 1,200,000 visitors to its facility to enjoy its permanent exhibits, including *Florida EcoScapes*, *Living in the Everglades* and *Welcome to Our Backyard*.
- *Trees Please!* educational programs were delivered to 26,793 Museum guests from August 2003 through September 2004
- *Water Matters* programs were offered to 15,990 visitors in the past six months alone. This project is still in process and the Museum expects to reach thousands of additional visitors by October 2005.
- On average, the Museum offers 4 of its own environmental programs or activities per day, including summer camp, day camp, over-night camp-ins, birthday parties, animal encounters,

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Science Café, sea turtle walks, youth programs, school programs, animal feeding talks, tidal talks, table talks, guided tours and special events. Based on this estimate, the Museum provides specific environmental programming to an additional 49,840 guests.

Project Description: In order to bring the Everglades restoration issues to life, the Museum created and implemented new, interactive educational programming on the Museum exhibit floor. These programs have increased visitor awareness and encouraged a personal connection to the *Florida EcoScapes*, *Living in the Everglades* and *Welcome to Our Backyard* exhibits and to the messages they carry about the restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem. Activities included:

- Interactive table-top demonstrations
- Theatrical presentations and science shows on the exhibit floor
- Formal demonstrations in the Hammock Theatre
- Staff-led interpretive tours of the *Florida EcoScapes* and/or Outdoor Exhibit areas
- Hands-on inquiry-based classroom programs

2. Museum-based Education: Off-Site Outreach Programs/Served 3,906,368 Broward County residents

- The Museum, together with Broward Community College (contracted by the South Florida Water Management District), served 2,878 guests with *Good to the Last Drop: Everglades Outreach* programs
- Environmental programs were delivered to 3,490 children at underserved schools in Broward County.
- The Museum created 8 environmental educational segments (including segments on the Everglades, rainforests, coral reefs, hurricanes and endangered animals) to air on BECON TV's *Real Time Science Connections*. BECON boasts 1.3 million viewers per year and televises its shows throughout the Broward County Schools as well as the local cable network.

Project Description: The Museum recognizes that a trip to a cultural institution is not always possible for some, particularly when a family lacks a means of transportation or disposable income. To combat this problem and make environmental education accessible to all regardless of socio-economic barriers, the Museum developed a series of programming for off-site implementation, including South Florida's public schools and community centers. These programs have increased public awareness and encouraged a personal connection to the Museum's exhibits and the restoration of the Greater Everglades Ecosystem. Activities included:

- Staff-led informal science presentations
- Broward County Public Schools' BECON TV

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3. Information Dissemination/ Served 98,991 individuals

- Museum staff provides participants of its environmental programs with free posters, activity sheets, flyers or other handouts
- The Museum has recently entered into a partnership with the South Florida National Parks Trust and the Florida Aquarium to develop and deliver statewide environmental education for students, teachers, at-risk youth and the general public. This outreach will be funded, in part, by a private foundation. As this project is currently in the development stage, the curriculum has not yet been delivered to the public.

Project Description: The Museum Collaboration Committee (MCC) has collected appropriate brochures, posters and other materials developed by Task Force agencies and organizations to disseminate within the Museum and in Museum outreach and educational programming.

4. Renovation and Enhancement of Existing Exhibits

Project Description: In order to keep its exhibitry relevant, fresh and exciting for its visitors, the Museum is in the process of updating, renovating and enhancing its 9,000 square-foot *Florida EcoScapes* exhibition. The existing *Florida EcoScapes* immersion-style exhibit features hundreds of living and replicated plants and animals displayed in 10 replicated Florida ecosystems. As the original exhibition was completed in 1992, it was necessary to update the living exhibits and displays to include new scientific discoveries as well as new information about Everglades restoration. During 2003-2004, the Museum completed many behind-the-scenes improvements to the aquaria and habitats. The following specific upgrades or additions are currently underway to improve visitor orientation to, and understanding of, the *Florida EcoScapes* exhibit:

- Replacing and updating exhibit labels and graphic signage to include new information about Everglades restoration.

Numbers served:

- The South Florida Water Management District has pledged funds and in-kind services to assist the Museum in updating the *Florida EcoScapes* exhibit labels and graphic signage. This project is in progress with an anticipated completion date of June, 2005.

FUNDING STRATEGY

The Museum has sought funding for this Phase II of the Outreach Plan for Greater Everglades Ecosystem Restoration through allocations from local, regional, state and federal governments as well as through grants from public and private sources as appropriate. In order to continue Phase II activities, the Museum continues to seek funds from these same sources as well as new sources.

NEXT STEPS: PHASE III

Phase II educational outreach activities are ongoing and have resulted in over five million people being educated about Everglades Restoration since its inception in 2002 through on-site education and exhibitry, school-based education, electronic outreach and information dissemination. Although Phase II will continue, the Museum-Task Force partnership has recently entered into Phase III.

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Over the next several years, the Museum will be preparing to build a major new wing called the Eco Discovery Center, which is a 27,000 square-foot addition that effectively doubles the Museum's existing public space and gives the Museum heightened visibility from Broward Boulevard. Visitors will discover the interconnections between human actions and the environment, between Florida and the rest of the world and between human health and the health of the environment. This undertaking will cost \$16 million dollars of which \$6.6 million has already been committed.

The expansion will significantly increase the annual visitation to the Museum, thus enabling even more people to be reached on an annual basis. Over the next 30 years, the Museum expects to reach 15-20 million visitors. All of these activities will allow the Museum to provide useful and engaging public information about the Greater Everglades Ecosystem and its restoration and through its outreach to urban, minority and underserved communities throughout South Florida.